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PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Andrew Baum, Ph.D.

CONTRACTING ORGANIZATION: University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

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I. Introduction

This is an annual report for the Center for Biobehavioral Research in Breast Cancer, a center of excellence that was initially funded in September, 2001. The Center was designed to support, stimulate, conduct, and disseminate research and research reports on the biological and behavioral interactions characterizing the development and progression of breast cancer as well as treatment and survivor effects. Behavioral variables, particularly those directly related to activity in biological regulatory systems and defense systems, appear are key determinants of participation in early detection and prevention programs, effective use of chemoprevention agents, and in patient adjustment, caregiving, and quality of life. This multidisciplinary Center is devoted to the investigation of biobehavioral pathways underlying breast cancer prevention and control, including development of research and training, involving participation by behavioral scientists, oncologists, nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, immunologists, and molecular biologists. These activities are directed towards organization, stimulation, and facilitation of integrated biobehavioral research aimed at prevention and control of breast cancer. The Center has assembled an interacting group of behavioral, biological, and medical scientists to foster new collaborations and extend existing ones in the context of training and education about breast cancer. These training opportunities, free exchange of ideas, and regular interaction supplement and connect research activity on proposed projects as well as research cores that support this research. Integration of theory, cross-cutting research themes, and multidisciplinary training has begun to produce novel ways of thinking about breast cancer research and innovative, patient-focused research activity.

II. Body

This section summarizes research accomplishments associated with our approved statement of work. Under normal circumstances, research findings would be presented and discussed and relevant publications would be appended. However, this is complicated by the fact that this is a Center project with numerous objectives among cores and research projects, and that funding for major parts of the Center's activity have only recently been released for our use. The difficulties in obtaining this release were due to continuing delays in obtaining IRB approval and human subjects reviews by the granting agency. We have secured approval by the University of Pittsburgh IRB twice since this project was proposed. It has been reviewed scientifically by the peer review panel and by the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute Protocol Review committee. All of these approvals were obtained in a timely fashion. Delays in final approval by the granting agency made it impossible to begin research on the Center projects until this year. Nonetheless, some Center activities were established and maintained and preparations for the research projects completed. These center projects were conducted since final approval was received.

One of the two center projects remains open for accrual and continues to progress towards completion. This study is concerned with psychosocial interventions for breast cancer patients. To date, 148 women with breast cancer have joined the study. Of these, 121 are early stage patients (I-III) and 27 are later (IV) stage. The majority of these participants have completed the intervention and initial assessments called for in the study protocol and are in the long-term follow-up. Recruitment will continue in Pittsburgh through April, 2008 and follow-up will be needed following the close of the project; this will be supported by the UPCI. In addition, new sites in Dallas, Ft. Worth, and Arlington, TX will open for accrual in the spring of 2008. The University of Texas at Arlington has agreed to support the extension of this study in Texas for an additional recruitment and follow-up, allowing recruitment of an additional 30-40 participants, many of whom will be stage IV.

The completion of major tasks in the statement of work for the administrative core of the Center includes orientation to the goals of the Center (introduction with faculty and medical staff who will be involved, delineation of education and training objectives), derivation of a calendar of events including monthly seminars, offering opportunities to trainees for involvement in Center activities), solicitation of applications for training positions and competitive review of these applications, attendance at monthly seminars, and attendance in activities of the Comprehensive Breast Center clinical conferences. These activities continue to characterize Center activities. Orientation activities have been completed and activities such as monthly seminars and bi-weekly research conferences have been conducted and integrated into a single calendar of events used in the local (Pittsburgh) behavioral medicine community to support faculty and others at the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie-Mellon University, and the UPMC Health System. The Center has co-sponsored annual poster sessions in health psychology at the University of Pittsburgh and has continued key collaborations with the Pittsburgh Mind Body Center and the Center for Minority Health.

Requests for training applications that have continued though the formal training components of the Center are not active. We are planning to submit a new funding request for training funds. A number of outstanding pre- and post-doctoral applications were competitively reviewed. No new trainees were accepted. Of our last three trainees, Tamara Somers completed her dissertation and a clinical Psychology internship at Duke University and has begun a post-doctoral fellowship there. Dr. Somers is interested in anxiety and patient adjustment to having breast cancer. Dr Elizabeth Mundy, interested in psychological trauma, and Melanie Flint, Ph.D. from NIOSH in Morgantown, West Virginia who is interested in PNI, currently have faculty-level positions at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Mundy has a K-award from NIH to support her continued development. In addition, Center members have attended seminars and research meetings as well as clinical conferences when relevant.

III. Key Research Accomplishments Research underway this year. (see below)

IV. Reportable outcomes Research underway this year (see below)

V. Conclusions

The activities of the Center were sharply curtailed by delays in final human subjects review and in release of Funds for the research core and projects in the Center. The major Center project is ongoing and all signs point to continued accruals and uneventful conduct. However, our accomplishments are not what had been anticipated. Nonetheless, all objectives and tasks that could be completed have been, and support was conserved so that activities increased immediately once approvals and release of funds were achieved. We have needed additional time (no additional cost) to complete all research activities. We have been very successful in meeting training objectives and establishing the basic core of the Center.